

United States Senate

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ENVIRONMENT AND
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VETERANS' AFFAIRS
AGING

December 3, 2009

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC

The Honorable Hilda Solis
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Shinseki and Secretary Solis:

I write regarding the recently announced closure of the Governor's Veterans Outreach and Assistance Centers in Pennsylvania (GVOAC). The federally-funded GVOAC program, established in 1980, operates five regional centers throughout Pennsylvania which provide vital assistance to veterans seeking federal benefits and services.

Given fiscal constraints, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell has ordered these centers—in Harrisburg, Erie, Greensburg, Boyertown and West Pittston—to close by December 31, 2009. For many veterans in the state, particularly ones in rural areas, the centers serve as a principal resource in pursuing federal benefits and services.

To ease the burdens on our veterans, I think it is important that these centers remain solvent, and encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor to work together to ensure that these centers continue to service our veterans. I think an opportunity exists here for the VA and Department of Labor to capitalize on existing infrastructure and relationships to improve outreach to veterans. I am eager to work with you to keep these centers operational.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to your response.

My best.

Sincerely,



Arlen Specter

cc: The Honorable Ed Rendell

*These centers are vital.
The continued operation/
costs are minimal compared
to the value of the
services*